

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 14652 of Potomac Boat Club, pursuant to Section 3107.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a variance from the floor area ratio requirements of Section 931.1 to permit an addition to a nonconforming structure in the W-1 District at premises 3530 Water Street, N.W., (Square 1179, Lot 811).

HEARING DATE: July 30, 1987

DECISION DATE: July 30, 1987 (Bench Decision)

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The site, known as premises 3530 Water Street, N.W., is located in a W-1 District on the south side of Water Street between 35th and 36th Streets, N.W. the site abuts the Potomac River to the south and Water Street to the north. The site is improved with a three-story frame boat house with a one-story brick addition.

2. The applicant proposes to renovate and build an addition to the existing structure located on the subject site for the purposes of installing adequate womens' locker and shower facilities, moving the mens' showers and gym from the ground level, which is subject to flooding, to the second story of the boat house, to relocate boat storage space and provide additional means of egress to the existing structure.

3. The applicant is a private boat club which has been serving the rowing community of Washington since 1869. The original three-story, frame boat house was built in 1908 and was designated a landmark structure in 1976. A one-story brick addition was built in 1962 to provide additional boat storage for the boat club.

4. The boat club currently provides facilities for canoeing, kayaking, recreational and competitive rowing, as well as rowing storage and headquarters for the Washington and Lee High School Crew Team.

5. When the original boat house and its addition were designed, women were not active participants in rowing and no adequate women's lockers/shower facility was planned. At present two very small showers and only lockers exist for the 110 female members. To accommodate the needs of the

women boat club members, the applicant's addition includes an enlarged and modernized locker and shower facility to be used by its women members.

6. The site is located within the flood plain of the Potomac River. The site floods every two to three years. The ground level of the boat house can be used for only extremely limited purposes. The space is subjected to frequent flooding totals approximately 6,076 square feet.

7. The other boating facilities along the Georgetown waterfront are on Federal property and are exempt from the Zoning Regulations. The site is one of the few places left on the Georgetown waterfront where there is physical access to the river. The site is the only water-dependent use in the area which is subject to the stringent FAR requirements of the W-1 zone.

8. The Fire Department requires an additional means of egress and the upgrading of an existing stair. The upgraded stair will reduce the building's existing space by approximately 260 square feet. The additional egress required totals approximately 400 square feet.

9. As originally designed, the 1962 addition was to have a second story. The second story was never built for both financial reasons and because the site and its surrounding area were considered for demolition in the 1960's and 1970's when the building of the Three Sisters Bridge was contemplated. In 1974, the property was zoned from C-M-2 to W-1 which reduced the allowable FAR from 4.0 to 1.0.

10. The proposed addition will not increase the membership of the boat club. The addition will not generate an increase in traffic to the site.

11. The plans have been reviewed and supported by the National Park Service.

12. The proposed addition has received conceptual approval from the Commission of Fine Arts.

13. Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 2E, by letter dated July 7, 1987, recommended disapproval of the application. The ANC stated that the applicant was requesting a variance from the FAR requirements because it was expanding its membership to the point where it outgrew its present facility. It stated that there has been a long-standing concern with limiting development on the waterfront by the community and that a granting of the requested relief would not be without substantial detriment to the public interest. The Board finds that the applicant

has stated that it is not expanding its membership and that its reasons for requesting a variance from the FAR requirements have demonstrated that there is a practical difficulty in complying with the Zoning Regulations.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

Based on the findings of fact and the evidence of record, the Board concludes that the requested variance is an area variance, the granting of which requires the showing of an exceptional or extraordinary condition of the property which creates a practical difficulty for the owner. The Board concludes that there are two extraordinary or exceptional situations or conditions affecting the site. The site's location within the flood plain of the Potomac River and the fact that it is the only privately owned boat club along the Georgetown waterfront are both situations or conditions which make it impractical for the applicant to comply with the FAR requirements.

The Board further concludes that the applicant has proven its case with regard to the practical difficulty it will have. The need to have adequate locker and shower facilities for its women members, the additional means of egress imposed by the Fire Department, and the original addition's design which calls for a second story and which when designed was in conformance with the FAR requirements, all demonstrate practical difficulties.

The Board concludes that it has accorded to the ANC the "great weight" to which it is entitled. The Board concludes that the requested relief can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose and integrity of the Zone Plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Maps. It is therefore ORDERED that the application be GRANTED subject to the construction being in accordance with the plans marked as Exhibit No. 9 of the record and the following CONDITIONS:

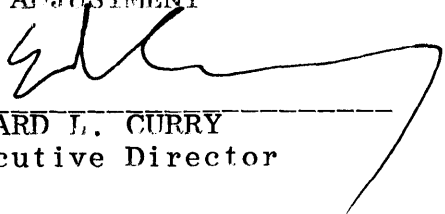
- a. Trash storage for the site shall be placed within the building.
- b. The applicant shall not increase its membership to more than 260 senior members and 60 junior members, nor shall it increase from 110 the number of students who participate in club sponsored programs between the months of February and May.

VOTE: 5-0 (William F. McIntosh, Lindsley Williams,  
Paula L. Jewell, Charles R. Norris and  
Carrie L. Thornhill to grant)

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BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY:

  
EDWARD L. CURRY  
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: OCT 8 1987

UNDER 11 DCMR 3103.1, "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS.

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